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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CURRENT METHODOLOGICAL PRACTICES IN THE GERMAN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS IN ALBERTA

by

DOROTHEA SCHMIDT

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Current Methodological Practices In the German Language Classrooms In Alberta" submitted by Dorothea Schmidt in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

Douglas V. Parker
Supervisor

W. J. Engel

Manfred Peter

Date December 12, 1988

This thesis is dedicated in loving memory to my father, the late Rev. W. Laser, who taught German for many years and fostered an appreciation for languages in my life.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to conduct an inventory of teaching methods to determine what approaches to the study of German as a second language are in current use in the province of Alberta at the junior and senior high school levels. Answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What is the linguistic, educational and professional background of teachers of German in Alberta?
2. What are the current methodological practices employed in the teaching of German as a second language?
3. To what extent are current teaching practices in the core German program in agreement with the goal of communicative competence contained in the curriculum?

A written questionnaire and an oral interview protocol constituted the instruments for the study. A total of 44 teachers participated in returning the questionnaire which had previously been tested in a pilot study. Five teachers from the greater Edmonton area were willing to engage in an oral interview. The questionnaire data were analyzed by the means of relative frequencies. For the interview data, the researcher identified six common themes which surfaced when addressing the protocol questions.

The results of the study with respect to the participating teachers can be summarized as follows:

1. About two thirds of the Alberta teachers of German are native German speakers. The majority of the sample reported one to five years of German teaching experience. However, for most of the teachers formal second language methodology training was taken during the 1970s.
2. To a greater or lesser extent, all seven of the following major methodologies are represented in the teaching approaches: the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, the Reading Method, the Individualized Approach, and the Communicative Approach. However, the Communicative Approach and the Direct Method were those with which teachers most often identified in the questionnaire.
3. Based on comments made on both the open-ended questions and the interviews, almost all teachers perceive a functional, meaningful, personal and experiential approach to language teaching as the goal for a successful language program. The emphasis on oral evaluation, of cultural awareness, of communicative proficiency all seem to indicate the newer approaches are reaching Alberta's German classrooms.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

For almost a century, language teaching theory has been conceptualized in terms of teaching methods (Stern, 1984). During this time, it has seemed that

> the teaching profession was engaged in a series of 'revolutions', most of which had their origin in an attempt to reach some consensus about the best way - 'the one true way' - to teach a foreign language (Omaggio, 1986, p.41).

Many of the methods employed during the earlier part of this century, were based on an empirical-analytic orientation where language teaching was mostly concerned with how to get pupils to know the language. In this process, language educators seemed to forget the fact that language was meant to be used. During the last decade, however, second language education has seen a shift in the theory underlying its teaching/learning approaches. A more social view of language learning has resulted in the concept of communicative competence as the basis for a fresh approach to language pedagogy. This orientation stresses that students must experience their world as a meaningful whole, a view which suggests that knowledge

cannot simply be transmitted by teachers, but must be jointly interpreted and shared. In line with this belief, it is now commonly held that students do not acquire a language separate and apart from themselves but one which is generated and employed through personal involvement.

History indicates that those who need to communicate in another language acquire this ability by participating in communicative experiences rather than by merely being instructed in the grammar of the language, as some traditional approaches did (Krashen and Terrell, 1983). Put in other terms, it is one thing to know about a language, but quite another to know how to use it effectively in a conversation with a native speaker (Savignon, 1978). As a result of this shift in emphasis, the profession has been made aware of communication-oriented teaching, student-centered classrooms, courses designed to meet the needs of the different students, learning about the target culture and its people, and self-expression in the target language. The end result has been that language teachers have begun to recognize the importance of meaningful language use at all stages of second language learning, and

> 'real communication' - as opposed to drill-like pseudo-communication to which teachers and learners have been accustomed - 'meaningful activity', - and 'spontaneous expression' are now familiar terms in discussions of what should go on in a language classroom (Savignon, 1983, p. V).

In short, communicative proficiency is being stressed over linguistic perfection.

However, Omaggio (1976) states that for many second language students the term "dead language" describes their day-to-day experience in the classroom, especially if activities consist of memorization of subject matter and automatic reproduction of responses without any authentic communication in a real life situation. Rivers (1985) still argues this point a decade later by saying that, although the value of a communicative approach has been generally accepted by the second language community, change within the classroom has not occurred. The majority of classroom teachers still cling to older methods. For this reason, Rivers (1985) stresses that

> language teaching can no longer be talking about grammar, turning over pages and pages of boring exercises, and wading through dull and tedious readings. We need interactional teaching where students and teacher interact in the new language (p.38).

Research shows that students are very much interested in communicating effectively with speakers of the second language, that they do anticipate being able to understand and use the language outside the classroom, and that they "respond[ed] eagerly to expertly prepared lessons using modern methods, and so there is hope for the future" (Rivers, 1985, p.38).

RATIONALE FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

A survey study of current methods for teaching German in American colleges and universities entitled "Where Are We Today?" by R. C. Helt and D. J. Woloshin (1982) motivated the researcher to look at the present situation in Alberta with respect to the German program at the junior and senior high school levels. The Alberta core curriculum for German as a second language (1984) puts a strong emphasis on communicative competence. This means that teaching approaches must give opportunities for authentic communication through the use of real communicative activities. In order to define the extent to which current teaching practice reflects this goal, this study proposes to determine what approaches to the teaching of German are being followed in Alberta at the junior and senior high school levels.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The Need for the Study

According to Stern (1984), "...language teaching theory over the decades since the end of the last century had advanced mainly by conceptualizing teaching in terms of teaching methods" (p. 452). However, method is far more than a single strategy or a particular technique.

Method characterizes a theory of language teaching which has its own assumptions, postulates, principles, models and concepts (Stern, 1984). With this insight, the past decade has noticed a shift away from the single method concept in language teaching. Second language educators have adopted an eclectic approach which moved in "a new kind of diversity within the profession, at least on the issue of methodology....We have begun looking for some organizing principle by which our various methods, approaches, materials, and curricula might begin to make collective sense" (Omaggio, 1986, p.42). In the second language-learning community this organizing principle often is referred to as the communicative approach.

As mentioned earlier, Rivers (1985) believes that while the value of a communicative approach has been generally accepted by the second language teaching community, change within the classroom has not occurred, since the majority of classroom teachers still cling to older methods. In his article "Beyond the Competitive Edge", Tonkin (1988) states that the efforts of foreign language teachers for the past fifteen years have been "to break out of a tradition-bound language classroom, dominated by the written word and isolated from other disciplines" (p.271). Yet, classrooms still see both kinds of practitioners, those who "see language learning as training for the mind, and those who see it as a device for practical communication" (p.273). In their article

"Major Surgery Due", Valdman and Warriner-Burke (1980) see a strong connection between methodological practices and curriculum design. They believe that traditional classroom practices are the result of traditional course design which still "reflect a predominant concern for linguistic structure (phonology, grammar and vocabulary) and ...tend to neglect the use of language in situation" (p.263).

However, there are encouraging signs that changes in second language teaching are under way. Stern (1982) states that "for many school systems today the renewal of curricula in a communicative direction and through a communicative teaching methodology is one of the most pressing issues" (p.18). A study by R. C. Helt and D. J. Woloshin (1982) on teaching methods in beginning German classrooms at the college-level suggests that it

> seems quite obvious that the development of practical communicative skills is not being ignored, despite the apparently large number of German departments which seem to stress grammar over communication skills (p. 112).

In addition, Hahn (1986) conducted a study in Nebraska, "Prioritizing Selected Modern Language Teaching Skills". He concluded that although "modern language teachers now in the profession are operating largely from the knowledge, training and beliefs acquired during the 1960s and 1970s (p.123),...reappraisals of curricular focus and methods in language teaching are occurring" (p.126). Rosenthal and Sloane (1987) reported on the University of

Maryland Baltimore County Project where they developed a thematic, communication-oriented approach to second language programs. This project grew out of the authors' own needs in language teaching, which one of them phrased as follows: "I feel like a prisoner of my own syllabus" (p.245). After the project, the authors summarized their results with the following words:

> We are struck by the feeling of liberation we have experienced - liberation from a fossilized curriculum and methodology, and from the tyranny of the textbook...Our methodology is unashamedly eclectic, appropriating excellent features of a number of approaches and joining them to some original concepts (p.252).

From these and other readings, the researcher began asking the same question that Helt and Woloshin asked: "Where Are We Today?" To answer this question, the researcher became motivated to conduct an inventory of language teaching methods in Alberta.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to conduct an inventory of teaching methods to determine what approaches to the study of German are in current use in the Province of Alberta at the junior and senior high school levels. Answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What is the linguistic, educational, and professional background of teachers of German in Alberta?
2. What are the current methodological practices employed in the teaching of German as a second language

in Alberta?

3. To what extent are current teaching practices in the core German program in agreement with the goal of communicative competence contained in the curriculum?

DELIMITATIONS

Since the researcher's major field is German, this study is restricted to the methodological practices used in the German programs in Alberta. Consequently, this study surveyed Alberta teachers who teach German as a second language either in junior high or senior high schools as well as those who teach credit courses in Heritage language schools. German teachers in the bilingual program, as opposed to the 'Core' program, were not included since their approaches differ from second language teaching methodology, in that the bilingual programs use German as the language of instruction for teaching content, whereas the core programs focus on German as a subject.

LIMITATIONS

The population of German language teachers in Alberta numbers approximately eighty. Regrettably the response to

the request to complete a questionnaire was modest. Although 89 questionnaires represented the potential population of teachers of German in Alberta only 44 were returned. As a result, the findings should be treated with some caution, since they may not be representative of the entire province.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. Subject to the limitation expressed above, the researcher assumes that the sample of this study is a reasonable representation of the population of teachers of German in Alberta.
2. The researcher assumes that the responses given to the questionnaires and interviews are indeed an accurate reflection of classroom practices.
3. The researcher assumes that teachers' methodological practices can be adequately assessed using the instruments designed for this study.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms will be used in the study and are defined as follows:

German as a Second Language (or Core Program) refers to the program in Alberta which offers second language instruction in German for x minutes per week beginning in

junior high or senior high school grades. In Alberta this can be a three or four year program depending on the grade in which the study of German begins.

Bilingual Program refers to a concentrated German language approach where German is the language of instruction for other subjects for up to fifty percent of the school day.

Communicative Approach is neither merely an oral approach nor a method. It is a humanistic approach to language teaching where students are taught the language through activities which attempt to reflect meaningful real life experiences for the learners (Savignon, 1983; Medgyes, 1986). It is an approach which includes grammatical competence, socio-linguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence (Savignon, 1983).

Grammatical Competence is analogous to the mastery of forms and meanings of a language (Stern, 1984).

Sociolinguistic Competence is the capacity to communicate appropriately in given social circumstances (Stern, 1984).

Discourse Competence is the ability to interpret or develop a meaningful whole from a series of sentences or utterances (Savignon, 1983).

Strategic Competence is the ability to use language creatively even within restrictions. It is the ability to compensate for problems in communication (Savignon 1983; Stern, 1984).

Communicative Competence or Communicative Proficiency "refers to the ability to convey meaning, to successfully

combine a knowledge of linguistic and sociolinguistic rules in communicative interaction" (Savignon,1983,p.v).

An Eclectic Approach is a multidimensional strategy where language teachers "do not subscribe to a distinct language approach" (Stern, 1984, p.29). The best techniques of all the well-known language teaching methods are absorbed into classroom procedures, "using them for the purposes for which they are most appropriate" (Rivers, 1981, p.55).

Methodological Practices refers to teaching techniques or activities employed in the teaching of German as a second language.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This chapter has introduced the study. It has presented background information, identified the problem and described the significance of the study. In addition, it has made reference to the delimitations, limitations and assumptions of the study and defined terms which are used in the Thesis. Chapter II gives an overview of the related literature. Chapter III outlines the research design and discusses the actual research methodology. Chapter IV discusses and analyses the research findings. Chapter V summarizes the results of the study. It also discusses the implications of the study and outlines suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Second language teaching has been subject to the same influences of educational thought as other curriculum subjects. Yet, it has also been influenced by work in linguistics which has made language educators more sensitive to the nature of the content in language teaching. "The history of language pedagogy can best be viewed as the result of an interplay between general educational history and influences specific to language teaching alone" (Stern, 1984, p.424).

Approaches to second language instruction can be traced far back into history, even "prior to the establishment of the Roman Empire when the Romans studied Greek as a second language" (Kulmatycki, 1987, p.15). In the same way, criticism of the methodologies employed has also been a part of the second language field for a long time. As a result, language teaching methodologies indicate that there has been a constant alternation between the emphasis on grammar and the emphasis on communication (Mackey, 1965). Valdman (1978) describes

this progression as follows:

> the history of language teaching is marked by cyclical alternations between stress on what today are called 'the communicative skills' and emphasis on written and analytical skills" (p.2).

With the expansion of the Roman Empire, second language teaching centered around Latin which was the language of international communication. Later, when the vernacular languages of Europe moved into its place in the sixteenth century, they were first learned informally and in practical ways for social purposes. Latin, however, began increasingly to be studied as a subject in itself. This approach was then transferred to the modern languages as they became school subjects. Here begins the conflict between formalism and activism in language methodology. It is since this time that one can observe the alternation in methodological practices. Stern (1984) refers to Kelly who

> sees strong parallels between language teaching in the Classical Period, the Renaissance and the Modern Age and another parallel between the Middle Ages and the Age of Reason. In the former, social objectives were dominant, as shown for example in the Modern Age, in the strong emphasis on communication, whereas in the later 'the balance had shifted towards written and analytical skills' (op. cit.:398) (p.81).

From the late 18th century, language in general had been the object of scientific inquiry. Language study was approached empirically, and grammar was the major focus in language teaching. It was believed that for language

teaching to be successful, it must be approached in a scholarly and scientific manner. Thus, the methodologies employed during this time were influenced by this viewpoint. This era marks second language teaching as scientific, instrumental, mechanical and predictable.

At the end of the 19th century many western countries brought modern languages into the curricula, and many attempts at methodology reform began. Methodologists in second language teaching have always looked "for theoretical developments as the basis for new methodologies" (Savignon, 1983, p.9) and related them to economics, politics, sociology, intellectualism, linguistics, psychology and anthropology. During the period of 1940-1960, language theorists looked to linguistics and psychology to help solve the problems in language teaching. Although going against the traditional thought of creativity, critical thinking and individuality in curriculum development, second language educators still hoped to reach the goal of communication by following the linguistic and psychological theories stressing drill, habituation, conditioning and work towards automatic responses within a rigid prescriptive environment.

Savignon (1983) remarks that "teaching has been and always will be as much art as it is science" (p.9). This viewpoint explains why it became increasingly difficult for language teaching to combine the practical and

theoretical. According to Stern (1984), it was around 1970 that "theorists were actually aware of the loss of direction, and confusion of thought had ensued" (p.108). It is not at all surprising that Rivers entitled an address in 1972, "Where Do We Go From Here?" Stern (1984) summarizes Michigan's thoughts on second language teaching as follows:

> ...the present state of the art may be characterized by the word uncertainty. This uncertainty arises from the current ferment in those disciplines which underlie language teaching: linguistics, psychology, and pedagogy (op. cit.:6) (p.109).

Many methodologies have been developed, only to confirm that there is no ideal method; all are interdisciplinary and take into account the interaction of a multiplicity of factors. Stern (1984) suggests, "language teaching can be interpreted in many different ways depending on the purpose for which the model has been developed" (p. 43). During this time of uncertainty, one begins to detect a trend away from a focus on methods toward one on language objectives, on content and on curriculum design where the focus is on the learner as an individual and a person (Medgyes, 1986; Papalia, 1976). Stern (1984) summarizes this development as follows:

> For over a century language teachers have repeatedly been drawn to teach language as a purely formal system and then had to remind themselves that their students need contact with native speakers, and that the language class should provide an introduction to a country and its people (p.191).

METHODOLOGIES

"The Method debate has brought into focus important issues of language teaching and learning" (Stern, 1984, p. 452). Therefore it will be important to take a look at some of the labelled methods to understand what they stand for.

The Grammar-Translation Method enjoyed popularity for a long period of time. Its main goal was to train students mentally and intellectually. The mind was believed to be trained and asserted by logical analysis of the language, by memorization of rules and paradigms, and by application of these rules in translation exercises. Grammatical rules and structures were taught first, after which, comprehension and assimilation of the same were put to the test in exercises and translations. Comparison of the target and the native language was important to convert each language into the other. The process was one of problem solving. Communication was unimportant and listening and speaking were hardly practiced. The teacher was the expert handing down knowledge which the students had to accept. In this approach the emphasis was on the "how".

The main intent of the Direct Method was to enforce oral use of the language. Listening and speaking skills were first developed by direct association with objects in

the classroom and later with everyday situations. The meaning of words was made clear by concrete representation, miming, sketching, manipulating of objects or giving explanations in the target language. Grammar was not taught explicitly but was acquired through practice. To counteract the inaccuracy and vagueness of the earlier phase of this approach, more practice in grammatical structures and occasional translation of words or phrases was given to check on comprehension. In this method a shift towards a more communicative approach seems evident.

The goal of the Reading Method was restricted to training in reading comprehension. Since pronunciation was considered helpful in reading comprehension, introduction of the target language was oral as in the Direct Method, although the native language was still used extensively. However, above all, vocabulary control was of prime importance. This method was used for a specific purpose; to teach reading comprehension.

The intent of the Audio-lingual Method was to develop language skills in the natural order of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In this method language skills were viewed as the product of habit formation. Therefore, structural pattern drills and repetition were maximized and word study and grammar analysis minimized. Correct pronunciation and intonation were watched very

carefully. Here the language lab played a major role. The textbook with its dialogues and pattern drills was also an indispensable tool. This approach systematically attempted to help the second language learner to duplicate native language habits. Although this method was based on the extensive use of dialogues, communication was still more directed than functional.

In the Audio-visual Method, language is primarily taught as spoken language which later is applied to writing and reading. Every lesson consists of three parts: 1. The sketch which introduces the situation for vocabulary introduction; 2. grammatical structures which are linked to the situation; 3. phonetic exercises which also are linked to the situation. To introduce the situation, the lesson begins with slides and a tape presentation. In this method, "the visual image and spoken utterance complement each other and constitute jointly a semantic unit" (Stern, 1984, p. 467). At first, dialogues are repeated and memorized by replays of the visual aids, but students are gradually encouraged to transfer the situation to themselves. In the second phase of the lesson, grammatical and phonological features which had previously occurred in the dialogue are now practised.

The audio-visual method also has a basis in linguistics and psychology, but "stresses the social nature and situational embeddedness of language" (Stern 1984, p. 467). Language is not learned in an analytical

but in a meaningful context. The attempt to provide meaningful experiences in language learning is an indication of its being a more communicative approach.

The Individualized Approach was launched in America in the 1970's as a reaction against the mechanical techniques of language teaching. The focus was on the learner as an individual and a person. A systematic attempt was made to allow for individual differences in language learning as well as

> to sensitize teachers to human values and human relations in the language class, and to create an awareness of the hidden curriculum of the social and affective climate created by the interaction among students and between students and the teacher (Stern, 1984, p.110).

Ideally, this method goes even beyond a communicative approach. However, the magnitude of the task of matching individual learning styles with the appropriate teaching techniques often hindered educators in putting this approach into practice.

The Communicative Approach intends to convey meaning and to develop authentic, liberated communication. To achieve this goal, it is a matter of setting up informal situations where students can communicate with each other and the teacher and thus acquire the language in a natural, functional way. This method calls for a healthy environment and an encouraging accepting relationship between students and teacher. Thus, it is important first to react to "what" is said rather than to "how" it is

said. Function of the language must take precedence over form. As a result, students are not so much taught explicitly but rather learn more through experience with the language. It is a highly learner-oriented approach where most of the experiences are culturally based rather than language-based. These experiences can be integrated through activities such as role-play, skits, discussions, personal conversations, group work, games, etc. Although materials adopt a situational format, at the same time, they serve for the introduction of grammatical features. However, the approach taken must be "minimum adequate grammar". Through filmstrips, films, music, etc., culture can come alive for communicative competence, and, at the same time, present a means for practising communicative patterns. "The most fundamental consideration in the selection of materials for communicative pattern drills or homework is that the resulting 'exchange' be as authentic as possible" (Helt, 1982, p.259). This is an approach that focuses on messages rather than on forms or conscious learning and enables students to experience language by meaningful language use.

"The word that best characterizes second language teaching methods today is diverse" (Savignon, 1983, p. vi). We no longer emphasize methods as much as the context in which the language is learned and the needs of the learner. We agree that no one method can meet the needs of all our students. Nor can a textbook and the

classroom alone provide successful language learning. We must encourage students "to move from the classroom to the second language world beyond and back to the classroom" (Savignon, 1983, p. VII).

TOWARD A NEW DIMENSION IN METHODOLOGY

Throughout the years, the function of language has been viewed in three different ways which, in turn, influenced the teaching of second languages.

During the 19th century, until the early part of this century, languages were mainly taught to impart a body of linguistic knowledge, usually grammatical knowledge, as the grammar-translation method demonstrates.

Later, around the middle of this century, the methods focused on the oral apects of language as can best be seen in the oral approaches implicit in the Direct Method and the Audio-lingual Methods. This shift from teaching linguistic forms to teaching a change in verbal behaviour was related to B. F. Skinner's works which had influenced the field of education.

In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a reaction against both of the above mentioned approaches. Although second language methodologies have moved from the traditional grammar-translation method through the Direct, Audio-lingual and Audio-visual Methods, the emphasis was still on linguistic form and performance objectives. It

is only recently that the social sciences have begun to influence second language education. Until the middle of our century, the question of relating language learning to society was not particularly important. However, after World War II the concept of culture teaching in a language course was introduced in the curriculum. Slowly language educators began to realize that

> society and culture are more than background and even more than content. Society and culture are, after all, the concepts that represent people with whom the learner eventually must make contact if language learning is to have any value in human form (Stern, 1984, p. 284).

In our language teaching approaches, we must be concerned with language as interaction as well as the context in which this interaction takes place because meaning comes "not from a passive contemplation of the word, but from an analysis of its function with reference to a given culture" (Yalden, 1983, p.55). Yalden (1983) also refers to Chomsky who stresses the creative use of language along with linguistic competence to interact effectively in a social situation. Furthermore she quotes Stevick who encourages language educators to see "the necessity of taking into account other than purely formal aspects of what it means to know a language" (Yalden, 1983, p.47). Many current authors (Crawford-Lange, 1984; Duquette, Dunnett, and Papalia, 1987; Krashen, 1984; Stern, 1975; Valdman, 1978) support this principle. Duquette, Dunnett,

and Papalia (1987) state that "language needs to be considered not as an object of study for linguistic competence, but as a system to be used functionally in context for communicative purposes" (p.479). Valdman (1978) sees that "the present period is the crest of a phase in the development of foreign language teaching stressing the use of language, as opposed to the study of its structure" (p.3). In connection with this goal, Yalden (1983) quotes Malinowski who underlines "the context of situation as indispensable for understanding language, and the subordination of the referential to social and emotive functions" (p.53). Stevick (1980), who strongly favors the psychological aspects of language learning and teaching, sees the classroom environment as another vitally important factor to the learning process. This view "has added a personal, performance oriented dimension to both language learning and language teaching theory" (Yalden, 1983, p.49). As a result, curriculum theorists as well as language teachers have begun to analyse the underlying educational philosophy to language teaching. Krashen (1984) stresses that

> the solution to our problem in language teaching lies not in expensive equipment, exotic methods, sophisticated linguistic analysis, or new laboratories, but in full utilization of what we already have, speakers of the languages using them for real communication (p.1).

It would appear, then, that the main thrust in second language education is now to be placed on what has come to

be called the communicative approach.

EMPHASIS ON A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

Much has been written about the need for communicative approaches to second language teaching. However, as Rivers (1985) stresses, it is equally important for the second language community to know what goes on in the classroom. This information is made available through research studies. Rivers makes reference to a study conducted by Mueller who found genuine communication in only three out of eighteen classrooms. Stern (1982) sees the Core French classrooms operating on "too limited a conception of the language learner and the language learning process" (p.38). Valdman and Warriner-Burke (1980) connect the existence of traditional classroom practices to existing traditional curriculum design.

What has been the impact of the communicative approach on second language education? Weir (1984) remarked in her study that the French marks given to students do not reflect their level of communicative competence. She implies that communicative competence is obviously not the goal of classroom practices. Other studies by Hahn (1986) and Rosenthal and Sloane (1987) indicate that "reappraisals of curricula focus and methods in language teaching are occurring" (Hahn, 1986, p. 126).

Although the second language community agrees with Kraft and Lewis (1982) who say "that the key to effective language education lies in the development of communicative skills" (p. 183), the previous studies indicate that "the communication model requires an attitudinal change on the part of most instructors" (Kraft and Lewis, 1982, p. 183).

Instruction based on a communicative approach centers around communication where communicative proficiency is stressed over linguistic perfection. It adopts a student-centered curriculum over the traditional information-centered one, sees language and culture as being reciprocal, and uses language as a means of self-expression (Savignon, 1983; Crawford-Lange and Lange, 1984; Rivers, 1985; Omaggio, 1986). If we want to describe communicative language teaching, we would have to use terms like "learner needs, approximation, functions, abilities, discourse, interpretation, interaction, negotiation, context, and appropriateness" (Savignon, 1983, p. 24).

Since this approach stresses communicative proficiency, we need to take a look at what this really implies. Communicative proficiency is the ability to combine linguistic and social rules to engage in meaningful communication. It might be a new term, but the concept has been one of the goals of second language teaching for a long time. While the profession has often

failed to achieve this goal, it has not always been the fault of the method employed. On the other hand, the goal was sometimes reached in spite of the particular method currently in vogue. The insight that language is a means to connect souls was held by many before us (Savignon, 1983).

The development of the concept of communicative proficiency comes from two sources: theoretically from linguistics, psychology and communication theory and practically from pedagogical needs and concerns. Methodologists seem to describe communicative proficiency as having three principal components:

1. Adding something more to existing methodologies by going from surface grammatical structures to meaning. Savignon (1983) formulates this approach in the following way:

   > The classroom teacher needs to institute a progression from artificial exercises to real language use, from discrete linguistic objectives to communicative objectives, and from discrete point tests to tests of communicative competence (p.24).

2. Not focusihg on grammar at all. These approaches proceed from meaning to surface structure. Students learn by communicating. They learn to communicate through the actual experience of communication. They learn skills by using skills.

3. Moving from function to form. In this approach the functional, situational language will determine which structures need to be learned. Here students are led

to move from communicative performance to communicative proficiency. "Central, then, to a meaning-to-surface-structure approach to language teaching is the rejection of an atomistic or sequential view of language learning" (Savignon, 1983, p.36).

The viewpofnts of language theorists on the concept of proficiency seem to part. There are those authors like Chomsky (1965) who stress an in-depth language study to reach a level of proficiency. Then there are authors like Krashen (1984) who do not encourage conscious language learning as a means to reach proficiency. Higgs and Clifford (1982), however, suggest that fossilization takes place if grammatical inaccuracies are not corrected in the early stages of language learning. Hymes (1972), Savignon (1972), Manly (1978), Campbell and Wales (1979) and Canale and Swain (1980) share a broader view of language proficiency which incorporates the knowledge of all rules of language use such as sociolinguistic, contextual, as well as grammatical.

For Savignon (1983), the foundation for a communicative approach to second language instruction, must be communicative proficiency. This "refers to the ability to convey meaning, to successfully combine knowledge of linguistic and sociolinguistic rules in communicative interactions" (Savignon, 1983, p.V). She develops this somewhat further when she reminds educators to consider four components when thinking of a

communicative model in second language teaching: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. In this approach language will be taught and studied as a communicative function with its relation to grammatical form.

> Functional use of the language means that the learner will be able to use it in a variety of contexts and situations. It implies that the student will not only acquire vocabulary and grammar but also socio-linguistic, discourse and strategic competence in the language (Di Donato, 1988).

Wilkins (1974) considers three components for proficiency in a communicative approach: the semantic: what to communicate, the functional: why one communicates, and the structural: how to communicate. This combination of analytical and non-analytical factors in second language methodology also agrees with Allen's model that Stern (1983) illustrates in Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching. Allen emphasizes that with a communicative approach

> language teaching can and should approach language learning objectively and analytically through the study and practice of structural, functional and sociocultural aspects, and it should offer opportunities to live the language as a personal experience (p.262).

This statement is very much in keeping with Dewey's (in Herron, 1981) concept of language teaching which stresses both the development of communicative proficiency and linguistic perfection but, at the same time, sees an intimate link between language and culture, valuing

language study in a social context. Freire (in Herron, 1981) also stresses that students and their environment need to be taken seriously in the development of language teaching approaches. Yalden, (1983) emphasizes that objectives, materials, methodology, evaluation, all "have to be seen and developed as interrelated aspects of a single process" (Yalden, 1983, p.69). Language teaching cannot be based on language as a self-contained system but on the learner's needs, motivations, characteristics, abilities and limitations. Teachers must choose their approaches in terms of relevance to the students' communicative purpose. Inman (1984) states that "the approach selected must conform to the goals and abilities of the instructor as well as to the aptitudes and interests of the students" (p.205). However, this focus does not allow educators to ignore the linguistic system of the language. In fact, teachers must have a thorough knowledge of it. Byrnes (1984) states, "while communicative language teaching is highly desirable, it must be complemented by the feature of structural and lexical accuracy or else irreversible fossilization will occur" (p.202). Although functions and grammatical forms must be combined in reaching communicative proficienty, language teaching should not be approached as a linear process, but rather as a top-down approach. Students must progress from the general to the specific (Byrnes, 1984, Di Donato, 1988).

If our goal is to train students to become autonomous language users, then our methodology in second language teaching must have as its goal communicative proficiency but must be needs-oriented rather than knowledge-oriented. It must be organized in terms of content rather than form. Teachers must remember that language is for use and must take as their starting point a communicative approach as Dewey (in Herron, 1981) reminds us. Language is the device for communication, it is the tool through which one individual comes to share the ideas and feelings of others.

SUMMARY

Second language teaching dates from far back into history and "had advanced mainly by conceptualizing teaching in terms of teaching methods" (Stern, 1984, p. 452). Throughout the years, language methodology centered around three viewpoints:

1. Until the early part of this century methodology was rooted in linguistics and had as its goal to impart a body of knowledge, usually grammatical. Methods were rather mechanical and technical in their approach.
2. Later methods were influenced by psychology and focused on phonology where the goal was a change in verbal behavior.

3. It was only in the 1960s and 1970s that social science began to make an impact upon language methodology. The concept of culture teaching was introduced, and educators began to stress the "what" to teach over the "how" to teach (Stern, 1984; Yalden, 1983; Crawford-Lange, 1984; Duquette, Dunette, and Papalia, 1987; Valdman, 1978).

In spite of these changes, language methodology still emphasized form over function. Only recently have methodologists begun to stress that language should be taught for real communication (Krashen and Terrell, 1983). With this concept, the communicative approach to language teaching was given greater attention. This approach does not stress any particular method but encourages teachers:

-to stress communicative proficiency over linguistic perfection,

-to adopt a student-centered curriculum,

-to see language and culture as being reciprocal,

-to use language as a means of self-expression.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Since the present study was designed to describe existing methodological practices in second language core programs in German, it can be classified as descriptive research. More specifically, it is a survey study where data was gathered from teachers of German as a second language.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All ethical guidelines as outlined by the "University of Alberta Policy Related to Ethics in Human Research" have been considered in this study. This project did not endanger or harm any participant physically or mentally. Consent from participating school boards and from Alberta Education's Language Services Branch was obtained. All teachers were asked to participate on a voluntary basis. Each teacher had the option to withhold his/her reply. Teachers were able to drop out of the study at any time. The anonymity of participating teachers was safeguarded as was the confidentiality of their responses.

THE SAMPLE

Through Alberta Education's Language Services Branch the researcher was able to obtain a list of schools where German was taught. This list included 83 addresses of junior high schools, senior high schools as well as private schools. Since private schools operate one evening a week or on a Saturday morning, usually three teachers are employed to teach the German 10, 20, and 30 credit courses. Thus, the researcher sent three questionnaires to these schools, asking the administrator to forward them to the respective teachers. Taking these factors into account, the researcher felt that it should be possible to draw on a total of 100 teachers of German in the province of Alberta for Part I of the study. Although 100 teachers were considered, the researcher was fully aware that not all private schools were accredited nor were all teachers in them certificated. There were also schools where German was no longer offered or where it was offered only through correspondence. These factors resulted in eleven questionnaires being returned uncompleted, leaving a potential population of 89 teachers of German for this study.

For Part II of the study, the interview component, only five teachers were asked to participate. These were chosen according to the level of instruction, junior or

senior high schools, and according to the location of the schools. All five teachers selected agreed to participate. The teachers selected included one junior high school teacher and four senior high school teachers located in schools of the Edmonton Public School Board, the County of Parkland, and the County of Strathcona.

THE INSTRUMENTS

A survey study can depend on three main tools to collect its data: opinionnaires, questionnaires, and interviews. The present study is based on two of these, questionnaires and interviews.

The Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire was:

1. to receive some general background information relating to each of the participating teacher's German background, teaching experience, and teacher education.
2. to receive data on methodological approaches.
3. to receive data on activities and techniques employed in the actual process of teaching German.

The questionnaire (see Appendix I) consisted of seven pages with two main parts. Part I included seven questions which were designed to obtain general information about the participating teachers. Answers to these

questions provided the researcher with information regarding the participating teachers' German background, teaching experience, and teacher education.

Part II focused on classroom practice and was again subdivided. The major part introduced seven scenarios, with one of which teachers were asked to identify. Four of the seven classroom samples were taken from Rivers (1981). Classrooms E and F were developed by Parker as part of the 1977 study carried out for the Language Services Branch of Alberta Education, and Classroom G was developed by the researcher on the basis of a communicative approach. Each of the seven classroom descriptions reflects one of the major methodologies in second language teaching.

-Classroom A represents the Grammar-Translation Method.

-Classroom B illustrates the Direct Method.

-Classroom C demonstrates the Reading Method.

-In Classroom D we find an illustration of the Audio-lingual Method.

-The Audio-visual Method is demonstrated in Classroom E.

-An Individualized Approach to language teaching can be followed in the Classroom F scenario.

-Classroom G illustrates a Communicative Approach.

In Part II of the questionnaire, teachers were also asked to include additional activities which they used along with their chosen classroom sample.

The second section of Part II of the questionnaire

enabled teachers to respond to some open-ended questions. These answers were helpful to the researcher in determining why teachers chose a certain methodological approach and whether that was their actual preference or only a result of their situation.

The Interview

Another phase of the study consisted of five interviews. These were carried out in an attempt to collect additional data. The interviews were based on 15 guiding questions listed on the protocol (see Appendix I). The resulting information was intended to shed more light both on the effectiveness of the questionnaire and on existing methodological practices among teachers of German by addressing the following questions:

1. How easy was it to identify with the scenarios?
2. What determines the choice of a teaching method?
3. Which teaching strategies work best?
4. Which teaching strategies are followed least frequently?
5. Which teaching strategies are hard to employ?
6. How is cultural awareness incorporated into language teaching?
7. How is oral evaluation carried out?
8. What are the most serious problems in language teaching?
9. What improvements for the German core programs could be suggested?

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The research for this study was conducted in three parts and was administered by the researcher herself.

Pilot Project

The questionnaire was to serve as the main instrument for the research of this study. Since the two most important aspects of a questionnaire are the arrangement of items and their formation, care had to be taken to prevent ambiguity in order to promote understanding of the items. To determine the clarity and usefulness of the questionnaire items, a pilot project was conducted in April, 1988. Two teachers from the Leduc School District volunteered to participate.

The questionnaire was identical to the one used in the study, except for minor changes which had to be made after the pilot project. There seemed to be some areas where wording and instructions were not clear enough.

As a result of this feedback, the wording of the questionnaire was modified to ensure clarity, simplicity, and understanding of the items.

Collecting of Data

The first step in this phase of the study was to obtain the addresses of all teachers of German in Alberta.

A list of addresses for the schools where German is taught was made available by the Alberta Education Language Services Branch.

Upon revision of the questionnaire, approval of the Ethics Committee, and clearance with the Field Services Division at the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, 100 questionnaires were sent out to the different schools in Alberta during the early part of May, 1988. In a separate letter (see Appendix I), accompanying the questionnaire, teachers were informed of the purpose of the study, were assured of confidentiality, and were invited to participate on a voluntary basis.

In June, 1988 a follow-up letter (see Appendix I) was sent to all out of town schools reminding teachers of the questionnaire which had been sent out earlier. Teachers from the greater Edmonton area were personally contacted by the researcher at their schools by telephone.

To supplement data from the questionnaires, the researcher conducted five interviews. The teachers were chosen from the greater Edmonton area to represent the junior high school level, the senior high school level, schools in an urban area, schools in a rural area, and separate and public school boards. After choosing the different schools, the researcher contacted the individual German teachers inquiring about their willingness to participate in an interview. All five teachers consented. Thus, appointments were set up with these teachers located

in the Edmonton Public School Board, the County of Parkland, and The County of Strathcona for the last week in May and the first week in June, 1988. Following this step, protocols (see Appendix I) were sent to the five individual teachers. In this way the participants were able to prepare for the interviews, making them much more meaningful for the process of data collecting. All interviews took place in the schools after regular school hours for approximately one hour. The interviews dealt with everyday teaching experiences, techniques, activities, and teaching approaches and were recorded by the researcher.

SUMMARY

This chapter has presented a detailed description of the design of the study. It has summarized the ethical considerations relevant to the research conducted and described the sample and the instruments used in the procedure for the collection of data. A questionnaire and an interview protocol were designed by the researcher to become the instruments for the two phases of this study. The questionnaire was tested in a pilot study and then sent to 100 Alberta teachers of German who represented the potential population for this study. The second phase of the study involved five teachers who participated in the first stage from the greater Edmonton area. These

teachers participated in oral interviews. The questionnaires and interviews were designed to elicit data:

1. to identify the current methodological practices employed in the teaching of German in Alberta.
2. to see to what extent practices imply communicative teaching.

A detailed analysis of the data and a discussion of the findings will be presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter will present the data which were derived from the questionnaires and the interviews. It will also discuss the findings of the obtained data.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Data pertaining to this section of the questionnaire are summarized in Tables I through VII (see Appendix II).

Native and Non-Native German Speakers

A total of 44 teachers participated in this survey study by returning their qustionnaires. Thus, the sample used in this study is 49% of an approximate population of 89 teachers of German in Alberta. As indicated in Table I, 68.2% of the sample have indicated that they are native German speakers and 31.8% are non-native German speakers. Roughly speaking, the data indicates that two-thirds of the participating teachers are native German speakers.

Degree Work of Non-Native German Speakers

Of the 44 participating teachers, 14 are non-native

German speakers. As Table II indicates, 50% of these have taken their major degree work in German, while the other 50% do not have their major degree work in German.

It was not possible to develop a similar table for the 30 native German speakers since 18 have lived in Germany for more than ten years and have received most of their education there. Of the other twelve, four are German majors while eight have their major degree work in another subject area.

Time Spent in any of the German-Speaking Countries

Since the reciprocity of language and culture has been established in second language teaching, cultural experiences will affect methodology. It is for that reason that Table III has been included in the study. As Table III indicates, 9.1% of the 44 participating teachers have never been in any of the German speaking countries; 2.3% have visited for several weeks somewhere in a German-speaking country; 6.8% spent several months in a German-speaking country. The majority of the sample, 81.8%, have lived in a German-speaking country for more than one year.

Teaching Experience

Table IV summarizes the overall teaching experience of the sample, while Table V looks at the years of teaching experience in German.

Table IV indicates that 20.4% of the teachers have been teaching from 1-5 years; 15.9% have been active in the teaching profession for 6-10 years. Percentage wise, the majority of the sample, 27.3%, fall into the category from 11-15 years of teaching experience; 18.2% have teaching experience of 16-20 years; 9.1% have been teaching from 21-25 years, while another 9.1% have taught for 26-30 years.

As indicated in Table V, the largest group, 34.1%, are those with experience in teaching German for 1-5 years, 27.2% have taught German for 6-10 years, while 18.2% of the sample have taught German for 11-15 years; 15.9% of the sample have 16-20 years of German teaching experience, 2.3% have 21-25 years and another 2.3% have 26-30 years of German teaching experience.

Tables IV and V indicate an important difference. While the sample's overall teaching experience shows a wide, but fairly evenly distributed range, roughly one-third have taught German for five years or less, indicating that the teaching of German as a second language may not have been their initial subject assignment.

Training in Formal Methodology Courses

Table VI shows that 2.2% of the teachers had some language methodology training in the 1950s, while 29.5% were engaged in formal methodology courses during the

1960s. By percentage, the highest number of methodology training, 34.1%, was taken during the 1970s. 29.5% of the sample took some methodology course work during the 1980s. 31.8% of the sample have taken no formal methodological course work in second language education.

Formal Language Training

As Table VII indicates, while 72.7% of the sample have taken one or more German language courses, 27.3% of the sample have not taken any formal German course work for credit.

METHODOLOGICAL PRACTICES

The main part of the questionnaire dealt with methodological practices. This data is summarized in Tables VIII to XII (see Appendix II).

Methodologies Employed in the German Classrooms

Data pertaining to teachers' choice of methodology is summarized in Table VIII. Of the 44 participating teachers, 6.8% indicated that Grammar-Translation Method comes closest to their teaching style. A high percentage of the teachers in the sample, 40.9%, are presently using the Direct Method. 9.1% chose the Reading Method, 4.5% identify with the Audio-Lingual Method, 13.6% work within the parameters of the Audio-Visual Method, and 2.3% are

able to use the Individualized Teaching Approach due to small numbers in their classes. The Communicative Approach rates as high as the Direct Method with 40.9% indicating this as their preference. Although not asked to do so, many teachers identified with more than one method: 11.4% specifically stated in their comments that they were working with an eclectic approach.

Methodological Practices among Native German Teachers

Table IX summarizes the methodological practices among native German teachers. Out of the sample of 44 participants, 30 participants are native German speakers. In this group 3.3% employ the Grammar-Translation Method; 40% use the Direct Method; 10% identify with the Reading Method; 6.7% prefer the Audio-Lingual Method and 13.3% the Audio-Visual Method. The Individualized Approach is not used at all by teachers in this group, but the Communicative Approach ranks highest at 43.3%. 16.7% of the teachers specifically identify with an eclectic approach.

Methodological Practices among Non-Native German Teachers

Table X summarizes the methodological practices with non-native German teachers. Of the 44 participating teachers, 14 are non-native German speakers. Of these, 14.3% use the Grammar-Translation Method. The majority, 42.9%, employ the Direct Method; 7.1% prefer the Reading

Method, and 14.3% chose the Audio-Visual Method. None identify with the Audio-Lingual Method, and 14.3% chose the Audio-Visual Method; 7.1% use an Individualized Approach. The second highest choice, 35.7%, was the Communicative Approach. None of the participants specifically mentioned an eclectic approach. When looking at the methodology tables for native and non-native German speakers, one does not find striking differences. For both groups, the Direct Method and the Communicative Approach rank highest. However, some minor differences stand out. Non-native speakers do not specifically identify with an eclectic approach and also rank considerably higher in the use of the Grammar-Translation Method.

Single Method versus an Eclectic Approach

According to the instructions of the questionnaire, 56.8% of the sample identified with one method. However, 27.3% chose to identify with more than one method and thus were grouped with an eclectic approach. Table XI was included to accommodate the eclecticists and to illustrate the apparent use of that approach.

Teachers' Personal Preference of Methodology

In many instances prescribed programs direct the methodology which is employed. On the questionnaire teachers were asked to indicate what changes they would

make in methodology, if they were given the choice. Table XII summarizes their comments.

The majority of teachers, 27.3% were not considering a change in methodology. Most of those teachers are working with an eclectic approach, that is with more than one methodology. 18.1% of the sample would change to the Communicative Approach. Half of these are presently working with the Direct Method. 13.6% see an eclectic approach, that is a combination of methods, as their choice. Again, half of these are presently working with the Direct Method. 9.1% would consider to change from the Communicative Approach to the Direct Method and another 9.1% would like to change to the Individualized Approach. 2 .5% did not answer that particular question on the questionnaire.

Additional Activities Employed by the Sample

According to Westphal (1979), it is quite possible to use a communicative teaching approach with any of the existing methods, as long as activities are prioritized. In order to get a more accurate picture of the methodology employed, teachers were asked to list activities which they use in addition to their choice of methodology in the teaching of German. The activities from the questionnaire were grouped by the researcher under six headings: Audio-visual activities, group work, culture related activities, oral activities, written activities, other

language-related activities.

Audio-visual activities included videotaping, videotapes, films, slides, and still pictures. Group work, which rated highest at 25.3%, centered around pair work, debates, discussions, drama, skits, role play, plays, and dialogues. Culture related activities consisted of music, field trips, food related activities, German resource people, use of authentic reading materials, and games. Oral activities centered around presentations, individual reading aloud, language labs, question and answer exercises, pattern drills, and reversal of student-teacher roles. Written activities ranked second highest at 22%. They included worksheets, quizzes, dictations, vocabulary exercises, word puzzles, and the writing of diaries, short stories, children stories, essay writing, travel brochures, cartoons, and commercials. Other language-related activities included grammar explanations and/or comparisons, the study of German literature, and listening comprehension. These activities are representative of the various methods mentioned in this study. To varying degrees, they were added to the chosen scenarios by 27 of the 44 participating teachers. In total 150 activities were reported. Table A summarizes the frequency with which these activities were mentioned.

Table A Frequency of Activities

	Number of times reported	Percent
Group Work	38	25.3
Written Activities	33	22
Culture Related Activities	27	18.1
Other Language Related Activities	17	11.3
Audio-Visual Activities	17	11.3
Individual Oral Activities	18	12.0
	---	-----
	150	100.0

Although these activities were added to the chosen scenarios, there is no indication of how much time they are allotted in the curriculum, nor could they be grouped with one method since they all overlapped. Nevertheless, the high priority of group work shows an emphasis on a student-centered approach. The high percentage of written activities is a good indicator that teachers are concerned not only with oral but also with written language skills. The stress on cultural activities indicates an awareness of the importance of the social aspect in language teaching. Even though the questionnaire asked teachers to cross out activities which they would not use in their chosen scenario, only nine teachers crossed out sentences. By doing that, in most cases the scenarios were somewhat generalized. In scenario A, two teachers crossed out

sentences which stress the high emphasis on grammar. In scenario B, four teachers crossed out the sentences which state that explanations or replies were given in German. Also two teachers crossed out the song activity. In scenario E, sentences which generalize students' performance and teachers' acceptance of the same were crossed out. In scenario G, two teachers crossed out some of the more specific sentences relating to showing a photograph and playing a tape. Neither do the added activities nor the crossed out sentences change chosen methodologies. These responses only indicate a broader approach to the chosen methodology.

Programs/Texts Used in German Classrooms in Alberta

Prescribed texts for the Three-Year German Core Program are: Unsere Freunde/Die Welt der Jugend and Vorwärts. For the junior high school program no standard text has been suggested as yet. Thus, junior high school teachers follow a variety of programs. Since most students in the private schools have some German background, prescribed texts are supplemented with more advanced materials.

The following Table summarizes the distribution of texts used in the German classrooms here in Alberta.

Table B Texts Used

	Number
Unsere Freunde/Die Welt der Jugend	22
Vorwärts	12
Wer? Wie? Was?	5
A-L-M	2
Deutsch Aktiv	2
Miteinander	2
Komm Bitte!	1
Schwarz auf Weiss	1
Themen	1

As can be seen from Table B, the major program that is followed in the German Core Program is Unsere Freunde/Die Welt der Jugend. Comments from five teachers described the text as too structured and grammatically oriented. However, the text gives ample opportunity for functional language use. It is also culturally oriented, and it can easily be used with a communicative approach. The second prescribed text is Vorwärts which is an Audio-Visual program. Three comments categorize the program as out-dated. Since the other texts are supplementary materials, they will not be discussed further.

Problems Which Prevent a Higher Level of Students' Language Performance

Since factors pertaining to the classroom will affect methodology, a teacher's choice of a given methodology alone does not guarantee success in language teaching. Stern (1984) suggests that the learning process is greatly determined by learner characteristics as well as by the conditions of learning. The following table summarizes those problems which teachers identified as major drawbacks preventing them from reaching a higher level of students' language performance. The problems have been grouped under the two headings suggested by Stern (1984): Student Characteristics and Learning Conditions. They are listed in the order of frequency in which they occurred.

Table C Problems Related to Learner Characteristics

	Number of times reported
Lack of effort	10
Lack of motivation	5
Poor attitude	5
Diverse language background of students within one class	3
Inability to apply language knowledge creatively	1
Incorrect L_2 concepts with students who have some German background	1
Total	25

Table D Problems Related to Learning Conditions

	Number of times reported
Too many ability levels in class	4
Lack of materials	4
A three-year German program as opposed to the six-year French program	3
Language programs operating once a week	3
Not enough opportunity to use German outside the classroom	3
The mixture of academic and non-academic students	3
Teaching German because of language background	2
Lack of L_1 concepts	2
Lack of time	2
Not enough support from Alberta Education	2
Not enough support from school	2
Semester system	2
Parents insist that students take German	2
Split classes	2
Activities often become only "time-off"	1
German is "only" an option course	1
Large classes	1
Lack of funds	1
The need to give English explanations	1
Too exhausting to teach communicatively all day	1
Too many goals in the curriculum. eg. Communication, vocabulary, grammar, reading, culture, etc.	1
Vocabulary difficulty at German 30 level progresses too rapidly	1
Total	44

Teacher Comments

The last question of the questionnaire was an open-ended question requesting comments about relevant issues for the teaching of German in general. This section was more difficult to analyze because most answers were somewhat general. However, after reading and re-reading the comments, the following categories could be defined:

1. Comments relating to teaching activities
2. Comments relating to teaching problems
3. Comments relating to methodological practices.

Comments which included teaching activities were grouped with the data in Table A. Comments addressing teaching problems were added to Tables C and D.

Comments on methodological practices have been interpreted in the light of Savignon's (1983) description of a communicative model which includes three major components. According to Savignon, the communicative model is learner-oriented, functional, and proficiency-oriented. These are discussed below.

1. learner oriented - The following comments reflect this concern:

> The only way a language could and should be taught is according to the immediate needs of the students.
>
> The students should have something to say about the methodology used on them.

However, since language teaching involves two-way communication, methodologies must also meet teacher needs. This is stated in the following comments:

> I find it hard to confine myself to one methodology.
>
> I find it important to use a variety of methodologies.
>
> Equipped with an excellent knowledge of the language and, of course, a love and desire to teach, will result in finding ways which no textbook and/or its authors are able to show or even suggest.

2. functional - Again, teachers' comments indicate an awareness of this aspect:

> My main emphasis is on communicating in realistic situations.
>
> To enhance fluency, students are encouraged to talk only in German regardless of mistakes. They enjoy experimenting with the language, knowing that they are not graded at this time.

3. proficiency oriented - The following comments underline this concept:

> Although communication is stressed, we need to keep the balance of performance and competence in mind.
>
> It is important that learning German is fun, but we also need to set high goals and standards.

TEACHER INTERVIEWS

The two instruments used in this study were the questionnaire and the interview. While the questionnaire provided useful data for the researcher, in employing the

interview, the researcher's intention was to gain additional information which would "describe and conceptualize what 'teachers actually do'" (Stern, 1984, p.493). By employing the interview method, teachers were encouraged to "think aloud". This process of thinking aloud (introspection) and self-observation (retrospection) as research tools has been supported as useful by Cohen and Hosenfeld (1981).

This section of the chapter will present, analyze, and discuss data derived from five teacher interviews. The interviews were based on fifteen questions and focused on the following topics:

1. Reflection about the Questionnaire
2. The Teaching Situation
3. Methodological Practices
4. The Teaching of Cultural Awareness
5. Oral Evaluation
6. Suggestions for the German Core Program

Reflection on the Questionnaire

All five teachers had completed the questionnaire prior to their interviews. At the time of the interview they were asked how easy it had been to identify with one of the scenarios contained in the questionnaire. All five teachers found the restriction to one methodology too narrow. One teacher said:

It was hard to pigeon-hole.

Another teacher commented:

> I found it frustrating. I knew which one was expected and felt pressured to give the correct answer.

The third teacher remarked:

> It was easy to say, 'no that's not me', to several of the scenarios; but when I had to choose between my last two choices, I found it hard.

All felt that the scenarios were descriptive, detailed and clear enough. However, the settings were felt to be too idealistic. All five teachers had included different activities from most of the methodologies and identified with an eclectic approach.

The Teaching Situation

Environmental factors exercise a powerful influence on language teaching and learning. Thus, it is "necessary to take note of such contextual factors in analysing a given language teaching situation" (Stern, 1984, p. 269). Sometimes these factors act as constraints; at other times, they may enhance opportunities for language teaching.

Since external factors influence methodology, teachers were asked to comment on their teaching situation. They reported generally satisfactory teaching situations, although they all had concerns. These centered mainly around learning conditions, agreeing with the questionnaire findings. Most of the teachers teach another subject, in most cases French, besides teaching

German. In some cases, such dual responsibility involves shared classrooms which inconveniences teachers. On the whole, however, facilities were reported to be good. While the enrolment varied depending on the community, in most cases, it was encouraging. In fact, some teachers reported large classes of thirty or more students. Unfortunately, some German classes are taught in split classes. Teachers in these classes were concerned since students get only half of their designated teaching time and thus, a communicative approach suffers. Variation in student backgrounds is also a matter of concern since this factor creates too many ability levels for communicative language use.

Four out of the five teachers follow the text, Unsere Freunde/Die Welt der Jugend. Again, this factor is in line with the questionnaire findings. However, some teachers felt that the program was too structured and grammatical for a communicative approach. They have to supplement the program with other materials.

Since German is an option, the drop-out rate is relatively high because students can't fit the course into their time tables. On the other hand, unsuccessful French students switch over to German and are sometimes no asset to the program. However, one teacher said:

> French Immersion in our school enhances the German program because it seems a natural in the upper middle class milieu for students to take German as an option.

As mentioned in the questionnaire, a major concern among teachers is the semester system for a language program. Students are away from the language situation for too long. In fact, if they take German in Term I of Grade 11 and Term II of Grade 12, it can be a whole year between courses. Another concern was the passing level of 50% which allows students to go on although they are really not capable, thereby adding a lot of frustration to the teaching situation.

When teachers were asked which strategies they found especially hard to follow in their given situation, three out of the five said:

> I would like to speak just German, but it is hard to implement. I have to resort to English more than I would like to.

One of the teachers voiced the concern of not daring to engage in unstructured discussion in class because of lack of confidence with the language as a non-native speaker. This is one limiting factor to be considered in a communicative approach to language teaching.

Methodological Practices

Methodological practices of individual teachers generally are related to their educational background. Of the five teachers interviewed, three received all or part of their training at the University of Alberta. One teacher studied in Germany and one in the United States. Formal training in methodology was a weak area. This

finding corresponds with that of the questionnaire where about one third of the sample had no formal methodological training. Teachers teach German because of their background, or because they have taken some German course work at one time, or another. Lack of formal preparation for second language teaching, of course, adds to the teachers' problems and dissatisfaction.

All five teachers see the communicative goal based on an eclectic approach as their top priority. Yet, all five see some limitations to a really true communicative way of teaching in the classroom. They feel that the settings are still forced and by far not functional enough because language learning does not take place inside the target language environment. In order to come as close as possible to this approach, teachers reported that they consider their students in deciding on their methodology. Their main goal is that students learn as much as possible in a natural, active way. One teacher said:

> I always think of excuses to have them use the language.

To get more insight into methodological practices, one part of the interview touched on teaching activities which teachers employ or avoid in the teaching of German. Teachers related that translations were at the bottom of their list. Furthermore, they commented that drills, simple repetitions, structured exercises and even readings and plays did not show the desired results. They said that these activities were not good motivators; that they

were boring and not at all communicative. On the other hand, however, one of the teachers commented that many techniques are incorporated to meet different learning styles. This, teacher remarked:

> I want to reach all. Students learn in various ways.

Those activities which rated highest were related to group work. Again, this supports the questionnaire findings. Teachers felt that activities which related to the personal lives of students, those that involve students on a personal level, and are relevant activities for them, yield the best results because then, language is learned in a contextual setting.

The findings on methodological practices derived from the interviews point to an eclectic approach with a communicative goal. Teaching approaches indicate an integration of Savignon's (1983) components of a communicative approach: learner needs, approximation, functions, abilities, discourse, interpretation, interaction, negotiation, context, and appropriateness. When these components can be implemented, teachers report an overall satisfying experience in language teaching. This is illustrated by the following comments:

> I feel good about my whole program.
>
> My students find enjoyment in using the language.
>
> It's fun because it's so individualized.

> I feel good about the activities.
>
> My projects are good motivators.
>
> It's good not to be stuck to one method.
>
> I feel so good about my German 30 poetry unit. My students do actually understand and get something out of it.
>
> It is encouraging that there is still a fair amount of interest in German. Although French is pushed, I am happy that there are still as many students as there are in the German program. I guess, we must be doing something right.

The Teaching of Cultural Awareness

Research studies have influenced language pedagogy by stressing

> that the language learner should not only study the cultural context ('language AND culture') but that he should be made aware of the interaction between language and culture ('language IN culture', 'culture IN language') (Stern, 1984, p. 206).

As a result of this insight,

> the leading works on language teaching theory of the last few decades (for example, Lado, Brooks, Rivers and Chastain) have all firmly stated that cultural understanding and cross-cultural comparisons are a necessary component of language pedagogy (Stern, 1984, p.250).

Capital "C" culture which is concerned with intellectual refinement and artistic endeavour and which focuses on the history, customs, institutions and distinctive contributions of the target culture, has been a component of language teaching since World War II. Small "c" culture, though, which looks at culture from an

anthropological point of view and considers the way of life of the target society, has been much more difficult to incorporate in language teaching. However, theorists in the field of language pedagogy are convinced that through concepts such as communicative or functional language teaching this goal can be realized in the language classroom. With the goal of a communicative approach to language teaching, it must be remembered that while communicative competence implies linguistic competence, "its main focus is on an intuitive grasp of social and cultural rules and meanings that are carried by any utterance" (Stern 1984, p. 229). Thus, language teaching must be for real communication and should be an introduction to a country and its people.

The interviews yielded an encouraging insight as to how teachers cope with the difficult problem of bringing German culture alive in the classroom. One teacher commented:

> It is rather hard. We are expected to impart knowledge which we don't have, or which is only book knowledge for us as well.

Nevertheless, both capital "C" culture and little "c" culture were important factors for all five teachers.

The following are some of the ways in which culture is included into teaching lessons. Of course, audio-visual approaches through slides, videos, films, and music are the easiest means. Some formal teaching with respect

to German history and geography was also considered as necessary. Bringing the lessons alive through the teacher's own experiences and by the introduction of authentic cultural materials was seen as important. Activities such as playing soccer or preparing foods help the students to step right into the German culture as do associations with holidays, festivals and customs which fascinate the students. According to the teachers, another valuable way for the student to experience culture is through projects. Students were asked to do some formal research projects or some practical projects such as writing children's books, designing travelling brochures, planning a two-week holiday in a German-speaking country, doing comparison studies on dating, commercials or other aspects of life in German speaking areas. All of these activities aroused the interest of students. However, one teacher cautioned:

> We need to be careful to have more language than capital "C" culture talk. As teachers, we must be careful not to be pro German. Students must not get a distorted viewpoint.

Oral Evaluation

Since the Alberta Curriculum Guide stresses communication, oral evaluation is an intrinsic part of measuring the progress and performance of individual students. Oral evaluation should be part of one's methodology, if the

goal is communicative proficiency. How, then, do teachers go about this task?

Teacher A:

> After every chapter I include some formal evaluation in the language lab. All of it is done on tape. Students read out loud. They listen to a dialogue and then answer some questions. They will get a topic which they can think about for one minute. Then they get thirty seconds to respond with a few sentences. Twice a semester I conduct short interviews where I include questions and answers or responses to some topic. Once a month I mark students on class participation. I choose five students at a time. However, they don't know who is marked.

Teacher B:

> I mainly use oral multiple choice quizzes.

Teacher C:

> Fifty percent of my evaluation is oral. I do lots of it, and it mainly comes from class participation. I include oral quizzes, picture descriptions, and questions and answers. For the more formal evaluation I use the language lab. At times I have students mark each other or even themselves on a scale which is provided for them. (see Appendix III).

Teacher D:

> I have a scale for every student and mark some every day. They can receive a maximum of three points, one for a response that is understood but incorrect, two for a correct response, and one point for

> pronunciation. On formal tests I give them a topic, and they have to give some responses.

Teacher E:

> I do some oral evaluation almost daily. Students know that they have to participate because much of their oral evaluation comes from class participation. The seating plan is the guideline for me. For any response I give one check mark. For a correct reponse I give two check marks. I add the check marks, throwing out the very low and very high marks, and divide the total by the number of participating students to arrive at an average mark. Each student is then graded out of that mark. Students choose a secret code under which their marks are posted on a weekly basis. For the more formal evaluation. I use interviews, themes, or presentations.

Oral evaluation is a vital part of the program for all the teachers interviewed.

Suggestions for the German Core Program

Before one can make any suggestions to improve a program, one must look at some existing drawbacks. Since problems can alter or even hinder one's approach to second language teaching, teachers were asked in the interviews to make reference to the most serious problems in the program. The majority commented on existing learning conditions. This fact reinforces the findings from the questionnaires. The time factor, split classes, time-tabling conflicts, German only being an option, insufficient administrative support for the language

programs, unpredictability of enrolment from year to year, the semester system, and unqualified students being pushed into the course because other options are full were all concerns for teachers. Of course, learner factors such as student attitudes and motivation were of no less concern to teachers.

When considering suggestions for program improvements, teachers realized that in any case it is the program plus the teacher which ensure success. However, there were some valid suggestions made:

> I would like to see a formal junior high school program. It is too late to start German in grade ten. Often those who would have chosen German, chose French in junior high school because German was not offered.
>
> We need more reading material which is simple but not childish.
>
> The financial support for the German exchange program should be adjusted to the French exchange program. Many families cannot take advantage of the program because of the financial burden.
>
> The semester system is very unrealistic for a language program. The eighty minute periods are too overloaded. We need more time for extra curricular activities.
>
> Our existing programs are somewhat outdated. I would like to see a new program.
>
> I like to see the German communities more involved so that students can see the language alive.
>
> Inservicing, workshops, and German immersion days for teachers should be planned by Alberta Education to equip practitioners better for their task.

> We need more consistency for the oral evaluation of the program.
>
> More interest and support from the German, Austrian, and Swiss governments would be helpful. Often we feel like beggars. It would be encouraging if they would offer more materials.

In addition to these suggestions teachers voiced their appreciation for the fine co-operation with the University of Alberta and the German Consultant.

SUMMARY

This chapter has presented an analysis of the data which was obtained through the questionnaire and the interview.

Chapter V will present the summary of the study, will draw conclusions based on the findings, will give implications for education, and will make some suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This chapter provides a brief summary of the study as well as a review of the findings. In addition, conclusions derived from the findings and implications for second language teaching are discussed. Finally, suggestions for further research in the area of methodology in second language teaching are considered.

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to prepare an inventory of teaching methods used in core program German classrooms of Alberta in order to determine what teaching approaches were being used in them as well as to determine the background and preparation of the teachers responsible for them.

Answers to the following questions were sought.

1. What is the linguistic, educational, and professional background of teachers of German in Alberta?
2. What are the current methodological practices employed in the teaching of German as a second language in Alberta?

3. To what extent are current teaching practices in the core German program in agreement with the goal of communicative competence contained in the curriculum?

For Part I of the study questionnaires were sent to the total population of teachers of German in Alberta. These teachers represented the junior high school level, the senior high school level, and accredited private schools. 49% of the 89 questionnaires were returned. Part II of the study involved a face to face interview with five teachers of German who had already responded to the questionnaire. These teachers represented the junior and senior high school levels of the Edmonton Public School Board, the County of Parkland, and the County of Strathcona. The instruments employed for this survey consisted of a written questionnaire and an oral interview protocol. Both of these were designed by the researcher.

The questionnaire was first tested in a pilot project and subsequently modified to ensure clarity, simplicity and understanding of the items. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to provide general information relating to teachers' German background, teaching experience, and teacher education of participating teachers. Part two of the questionnaire was intended to obtain information on the methodological practices of the practitioners. The interviews were based on a protocol consisting of fifteen questions which the researcher had designed. Information resulting from these interviews was

intended to provide additional information about existing methodological practices.

Forty-four teachers (49%) returned the questionnaire. Most of the questionnaire data was analyzed through the use of relative frequencies. Relevant data was then discussed and presented in table form. The open-ended questions of the questionnaire and the interview data were analyzed by identifying common themes which appeared in them and by employing a comparison method. These themes were then categorized, interpreted, and discussed in the light of the problem of the present study.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE FINDINGS

The conclusions that follow are based on the findings relating to the data of this study. They are discussed in reference to the questions outlined in The Purpose of the Study. Since the sample represents only 49% of the German-teaching population, findings are limited and generalizations can only be made with caution.

1. What is the linguistic, educational, and professional background of teachers of German in Alberta?

About two thirds of the Alberta teachers of German are native German speakers. Half of the remaining third have their major degree work in German. 81.8% of the sample have lived in a German-speaking country for more

than one year.

Most of the teachers, 27.3%, have teaching experience of eleven to fifteen years. However, for their teaching experience in German itself, the majority, 34.1%, of the sample reported only one to five years.

With respect to their formal preparation for teaching German, 72.7% of the teachers, had been engaged in formal German course work at one time or another. In addition, two-thirds of the teachers have taken formal second language methodology training. For most of the teachers, 34.1%, this training was taken during the 1970s.

2. What are the current methodological practices employed in the teaching of German as a second language in Alberta?

The study sought to determine to what extent each of the following seven major language teaching methodologies is used in the teaching of German: the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, the Reading Method, the Audio-Lingual Method, the Audio-Visual Method, the Individualized Approach, and the Communicative Approach. To a greater or lesser extent, ~~all~~ seven of these methodologies are represented in the teaching approaches reported by the sample. In addition to these methodologies, teachers also identified with an eclectic approach.

Two major methodologies appear to be equally important: the Direct Method and the Communicative

Approach, both rating 40.9%. Although 56.8% of the teachers identified with one methodology as the questionnaire required, 27.3% preferred to work with more than one method, that is with an eclectic approach. There was no major difference in methodological practices among native and non-native German teachers.

3. To what extent are current teaching practices in the core German program in agreement with the goal of communicative competence contained in the curriculum?

The major program which is followed for the teaching of German is Unsere Freunde/Die Welt der Jugend. However, being aware of the value of a communicative approach, teachers use additional materials to further accommodate the communication factor. This factor is also reflected by their use of group work activities. As for actual teaching approaches, the Communicative Approach and the Direct Method were those with which teachers most often identified in the questionnaire. Another 18.1% of the teachers would choose the Communicative Approach if they were to change their methodology. This indicates an attempt to engage in a communicative methodology.

Based on comments made on both the open-ended questions and the interviews, most teachers believe that activities which involve students on a personal level yield the best results. Others feel that language teaching must be for real communication and should be an

introduction to a foreign society. Almost all teachers perceive a functional, meaningful, personal and experiential approach to language teaching as the goal for a successful language program. At the same time they feel that unfavorable learning conditions seem to be the biggest drawback to using newer approaches and techniques more fully. Nevertheless, the emphasis on oral evaluation, of cultural awareness, of communicative proficiency all seem to indicate that newer approaches are reaching Alberta's German classrooms.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

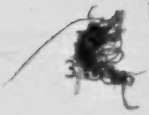
The question of how to teach language has been a concern for language educators for over twenty-five centuries (Kelly, 1969). For the last century, language pedagogy has "attempted to solve the problems of language teaching by focusing attention almost exclusively on teaching methods" (Stern, 1984, p. 452). However, all methods seem to indicate three common weaknesses:

1. They represent fixed combinations of language teaching beliefs.
2. They over-emphasize a single aspect of language teaching and learning.
3. They make assumptions about the learner and the process of learning.

Based on these weaknesses, a shift away from the single method concept to one of language objectives, content, and a focus on the learner as an individual and a person became apparent. Although the concept of communicative competence has been increasingly emphasized in second language pedagogy, this approach has been a major goal of the German curriculum in Alberta for many years. The 1974 Curriculum Guide states that "the long range goals in the study of modern languages are cultural understanding and effective communication". The first goal of the 1984 Curriculum Guide reads as follows: "To acquire basic communication skills". For this goal to become the foundation for second language teaching in Alberta's German classrooms, the following points should be considered:

1. The findings of the study indicate that one third of the Alberta teachers of German have had no formal methodology training. This fact implies that many teachers may be teaching German mostly because of their linguistic background. If teachers are expected to be successful in their classrooms, they must feel competent, secure, and equipped for the task. Therefore, there seems to be a need for teacher upgrading in the field of methodology.
2. As the study indicates, most of the teachers' methodological training occurred in either the 1960s or 1970s, just before a serious interest in the Communicative Approach began in Alberta. This

underlines the need for ongoing professional development, since it is very important for language teachers not to become stagnant. To equip teachers better for their job, regular inservice sessions, workshops, and immersion days should be offered.* If teachers are expected to keep up with current methodological practices, formal methodology course work should be required at frequent intervals. Many opportunities for professional development are offered to German teachers through the Goethe Institut as well as other agencies and institutions. In fact, financial support for studies in Germany or for workshops in Canada are available from the Federal Republic of Germany. Teachers should take much more advantage of such possibilities in order to keep up with current methodological developments.



As the findings of the study point out, the main program which is followed is Unsere Freunde/Die Welt der Jugend. This text was described by five teachers as structured and grammatically oriented. Vorwärts was referred to by three teachers as being outdated. This text was printed in 1974 and no longer presents a culturally or a linguistically true picture. These factors imply a slight contradiction between curriculum goals and curriculum in action. If a communicative approach is the goal of the German

* In addition, experiences in the language itself would especially benefit non-native German teachers.

curriculum, textbooks should support the goal. It is somewhat difficult for teachers to work within the parameters of a communicative approach without the proper tools. A more current text for the German Core Program should be considered for adoption as a learning resource.

4. Since unfavorable learning conditions are a major concern for teachers, the implication is that greater understanding of the problems involved in offering language programs is necessary. Many problems such as split classes, large classes, and time tabling, could be solved on the local level. However, others such as lack of materials, funds, curriculum changes, and the semester systems should be reviewed on the provincial level.
5. On the educational level, language programs should be viewed as equally as important as core subjects such as English, Social Studies, and Mathematics. For German the implication is that it should be put on an equal footing with French, including more equal funding and the development of a six-year program.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Some suggestions for further research are listed below:

1. This study did not employ observation of teaching approaches in the classroom itself as a research approach. Observation of classroom procedures could

provide valuable insight into methodological practices.

2. Since the humanistic component is very much a part of the Communicative Approach, a study could be conducted to determine the effect of methodology on teacher-student relationships (classroom atmosphere).
3. There seems to be a real need for new techniques in the area of oral evaluation. If we believe in a communicative approach to second language teaching, we need to have a better understanding both of the level of students' communicative competence, and the extent to which our communicative teaching approaches have been successful in achieving this.
4. A comparison study of methodologies employed in the teaching of German and of other second languages in Alberta could be undertaken.

CONCLUSION

Results of the study imply that the methodological practices in the German classrooms in Alberta are equally rooted in the Communicative Approach and the Direct Method. However, most teachers see the communicative approach to language teaching as their goal, and one fifth indicated a willingness to change to such an approach. Keeping the goal of communicative competence in mind, teachers pointed to the need to focus more on the students as individuals and to make them partners in the process of

language teaching, in the course of which language becomes a tool. Their choice of classroom activities suggests that teachers are concerned with using the language in a natural, functional setting to provide real experiences for their students, and that there is no universal teaching method suited for every need. In addition, findings imply that teachers are not only striving for communicative performance but much more so for communicative competence which combines performance and proficiency. By employing a communicative approach to language teaching, German teachers have shown that "language is far more than a system to be explained....It is people interacting with people" (Savignon, 1983, p. 187).

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APPENDIX I

RESEARCH STUDY MATERIALS

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Dear Colleague:

I would feel so much better to address this letter to you personally. However, I was unable to obtain your name. Thus, I hope you will forgive me for this somewhat impersonal way of addressing you.

I am presently engaged in the M.Ed. program at the University of Alberta. My thesis study intends to identify the current methodologies employed in the teaching of German in Alberta. I would be very grateful if you would assist me in this endeavour by completing the attached questionnaire.

Since our community of German teachers is rather small, I really depend on your input and would appreciate your immediate reply.

All information will be handled totally confidentially. You will not be asked to supply your name at any time. Your reply will be returned to the Faculty of Secondary Education where Dr. Parker will separate the cover page with it's identifying information and forward the rest of the questionnaire to me.

Thank you for your collegial support!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Dorothea Schmidt
Department of Secondary Education
University of Alberta

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

CURRENT METHODOLOGICAL PRACTICES IN THE TEACHING OF GERMAN

The information which you fill in on this questionnaire will be handled on a totally confidential basis. In order to ensure this, the first two pages of the questionnaire are identified only by a serial number. Once the questionnaire arrives at the Faculty of Education, Dr. Parker will separate the first page from the rest of the questionnaire, and I will deal only with the second half of the questionnaire.

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Are you a native German speaker?

YES___ NO ___

2. If not, is your major degree work in German?

YES___ NO ___

3. How much time, if any, have you spent in Germany or any of the German-speaking Countries?

weeks ___ months ___ years

4. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

___ years

5. For how many years have you been teaching German?

___ years

6. Have you taken any formal methodology courses for second language teaching?

in the 1960's YES___ NO___

in the 1970's YES___ NO___

in the 1980's YES___ NO___

7. How many German language courses (literature courses not included) have you taken?

__number of courses

CLASSROOM SAMPLES:

Below you will find a description of seven German classes.

I. 1. Please Check the one that comes closest to your own teaching style.

2. (a) For your convenience the sentences in each scenario have been numbered. In the sample of your choice, please cross out any numbered sentence which does not apply to your own teaching approach.

(b) After you have done this, please turn to page 6 and describe any activities and/or techniques that you employ in addition to those described in the sample of your choice.

II. Please answer the questions that follow the classroom samples.

CHECK ___ CLASSROOM A

(1) Students open their German Textbooks to prepare for today's lesson which will be a new section. (2) They look at a reading selection which has a list of new vocabulary items with English equivalents accompanying it. (3) The students' homework for today was to learn these new words thoroughly. (4) Some of the students are doing last minute studying since the first part of the lesson will be a quick written vocabulary quiz. (5) When correcting this test, students spell out the German word in English. (6) The teacher is not very satisfied with the students' results, but since the material must be covered, he moves on to having individual students read part of the reading. (7) Since this becomes a painful procedure for the teacher and an embarrassing experience for the students, the teacher changes the format by reading a passage aloud to the class him/herself and then asking the students to finish the rest of the reading silently. (8) Now begins the process of translation. (9) One by one each student translates a sentence from the reading with occasional help from the teacher. (10) This part moves on very well, and the teacher can concentrate on the core of the lesson. (11) On the board a lucid outline of the use of the past tense is set out with examples taken from the reading. (12) Rules are explained in English in great detail. (13) In the process unfamiliar terminology is explained in the context of the English grammar and then transferred to the German grammar. (14) Now rules, examples but especially exceptions are copied by the students. (15) After a period of questioning, the students works on paradigms, grammatical exercises and translation of English sentences which require the use of the past tense. (16) These sentences have been constructed artificially to include all possible aspects of the rules. (17) Any work that is not finished in class is assigned for homework.

CHECK ___ CLASSROOM B

(1) The teacher enters and greets the class with "Guten Morgen". (2) Students reply in German and wait expectantly. (3) The teacher continues to talk in German about objects in the classroom, asks questions, and gives orders. (4) As the students perform their tasks, they tell the class in German what they have done. (5) The lesson then centres around a picture which illustrates new vocabulary and activities relating to the situation depicted. (6) It is a shopping scene which the teacher describes in German, demonstrating the meaning by actions or by miming until students look enlightened. (7) New words and phrases are repeated and students try to give responses to questions in German using the patterns which have been introduced. (8) Of course, performance varies but accuracy is attempted. (9) Now that the vocabulary seems to be understood, assimilated and used orally, a passage of similar content is read from the book, reading after the teacher first and then individually. (10) This exercise is followed by questions which are asked in German and students also reply in German. (11) When difficulties of vocabulary or structure occur, they are once more explained in German and students make notes on them in German. (12) The class ends with a song that students seem to enjoy greatly.

CHECK ___ CLASSROOM C

(1) This time the class uses small readers, looking at a continuous text of about 20 pages. (2) The style is simple. (3) New words are explained in German at the bottom of the page. (4) The story seems interesting and amusing. (5) With the help of some pictures, the setting of the story which takes place in Germany is introduced in German. (6) Main characters are introduced briefly, and their names are written on the board. (7) To create interest, the teacher reads the first section of the story aloud while students follow along in the reader. (8) The teacher asks a few questions in English and asks the students to reread the section silently, looking for answers to the questions they couldn't answer. (9) Now he/she asks more questions in German which the students also try to answer in German. (10) Now students are asked to finish reading the story in pairs or alone. (11) One can hear a quiet murmur or see someone asking the teacher for help. (12) At the end of different sections, students will go to the teacher who asks them questions in German about the story, or gives them a short true-false test. (13) Toward the end of the class those who have read the most are congratulated. (14) For homework some questions to the parts wkwhich have been read will be answered in German.

CHECK ___ CLASSROOM D

(1) All books are closed. (2) The class begins by repeating German sentences in chorus. (3) They try hard to imitate the teacher's pronunciation and intronation. (4) The different utterances are part of a dialogue which is based on an every day incident of a student in Germany. (5) A translation of the different sentences is pinned up on the board. (6) Unless they want to refresh their memory as to what they are saying, students generally don't look at these sentences but rather watch the lip movement and expressions of the teacher. (7) When the whole class masters the pronunciation well, they are divided in 2 groups each repeating the sentences in response to each other. (8) When this is done well, sentences are repeated in rows and finally by individuals. (9) If the individuals stumble, the teacher goes back to ssmall group repetitions. (10) After mastery of the learned material, pairs are asked to act out the conversation. (11) Now that the dialogue sentences are well learned, students open their books and read what they have just learned. (12) The teacher begins some pattern drilling where students repeat some other sentences of identical structure. (13) The teacher gives word cues for students to construct similar sentences to the pattern sentences with only slight lexical differences. (14) This is done about seven or eight times. (15) When the students hesitate, the teacher makes a short comment on former patterns pointing out what they have in common. (16) Again the procedure starts with the whole group, with smaller groups and finally, with individual students. (17) This indicates to the teacher whether structures have been assimilated. (18) Next students write out the structure drill and add lexical variants of their choice. (19) For homework students take home records which they will play over to help them memorize the dialogue sentences. (20) Words or phrases which seem difficult to write are to be written out several times.

CHECK ___ CLASSROOM E

(1) The teacher begins by asking a few questions in German about the different activities in which the students took part after school yesterday. (2) The teacher then turns on the filmstrip projector and shows five pictures which illustrate a conversation taking place on a street in Germany. (3) Since the class was introduced to these yesterday, the teacher then asks them to reproduce the dialogue which accompanies the pictures. (4) Several students are then asked to repeat these sentences in turn. (5) When the teacher is satisfied with their pronunciation she introduces four new pictures and plays the tape that goes with them. (6) She then carefully explains in German the meaning of the new words which are in these sentences. (7) When she is sure that everyone understands she asks the students one at a time to repeat the new sentences. (8) When most of the class can do this without too much difficulty and with a satisfactory pronunciation she moves to another activity. (9) This may be a talk about the daily lives of German-speaking people, listening to a new record of German music from Germany, or free-conversation where students are given the plot of a conversation and are asked to prepare the actual dialogue in groups of two or three. (10) These are then presented in front of the class. (11) Finally the class is given a written assignment to do in their notebooks.

CHECK ___ CLASSROOM F

(1) As John enters the German classroom he goes to the shelf where his personal file folder is kept. (2) In it is a list of the activities which he will carry out today. (3) To begin with he is asked to go to the 'cultural corner' and watch a film about a trip on a bus in Germany. (4) When he has seen the film along with three or four other students he is asked to write down on a piece of paper (which he is to hand in later) all the differences which he has noted between this trip and a similar one in his own city. (5) Next he goes to the 'language laboratory' corner and practices the sentences from the new lesson orally. (6) He does this until he is satisfied with his own pronunciation. (7) This is possible, since the tape recorder records both the model sentence from the original tape and then John's own repetition. (8) For a few minutes he is free to look at a student magazine in German. (9) He particularly enjoys the cartoons. (10) Then along with five other students he goes to the 'conversation corner' where the teacher carries on a discussion with them in German about subjects of particular interest to John and the other students. (11) When they have finished, John goes to an empty desk, takes the textbook which the class uses and works on a written exercise. (12) When he has finished he gets a correction key from the teacher's desk and checks his work. (13) When he has made any corrections he places the exercise in his file folder and begins to study for the unit test which he will take tomorrow to see whether or not he is ready to go on to the next unit.

CHECK ___ CLASSROOM G

(1) This classroom looks really different. (2) It is filled with many pictures and posters of Germany. (3) In fact, there seems to be quite a bit of "interesting junk" around. (4) The desks are organized in a horseshoe pattern. (5) As the students come in, the teacher takes the opportunity to greet them at the door and asks some individual questions, such as: "Wie geht es dir heute? Geht es dir gut?", etc.

(6) At the beginning of the class, the teacher asks some personal questions: "Wie geht es deiner Familie? Wie ist das Wetter heute? Was hast du gestern gemacht? Was fuer Faecher hast du heute?" etc. (7) Then the teacher encourages students to ask each other one or two questions. (8) The teacher might give some pointers, such as: "Frag (name), ob er muede ist", etc. (9) The teacher then shows a photograph of a friend. "Dies ist mein/e Freund/in". (10) She/he continues to describe the friend - (name, dwelling-place, older/younger, taller/smaller, etc.). (11) Now two students are asked to come to the front. (12) The concept of adjective comparisons is carefully introduced by using students but also by transferring the concept to objects in the classroom (Flugzeug schneller als Auto, U.S.W.). (13) At this stage the teacher asks the students if they have noticed how the adjective comparison is formed in German. (14) Of course, most students are aware of the "er" ending, and some have noticed the vowel change.

(15) Then the students are asked about their friends. (Hast du eine Freundin/einen Freund? Wie heisst, wo wohnt, groesser, kleiner, nicht so - wie). (16) Slides with a tape of a German teenage couple are presented, the dialogue repeated and discussed. (17) Special attention is given to the adjective comparisons. (18) Now several students will roleplay the dialogue. (19) Students are then given a handout with pictures and some descriptions about a German boy - and girlfriend. (20) In groups of two's, the girls are asked to get as much information as possible about the boy and the boys about the girl. (21) This information is now shared. One girl says, "Sabine ist 14 Jahre". One boy answers, "Heinz ist 15 Jahre". (22) Together they come up with a comparison which the teacher writes on the board (Heinz ist aelter als Sabine. Sabine ist juenger als Heinz). (23) Now the class copies these sentences. (24) For the last 10 minutes, the class plays a game. (25) One student comes to the front, while everybody else stands up. The student says, "Meine Freundin/ mein Freund heisst (name)". (26) Those students who can ask an appropriate question, such as "Ist er/sie groesser als du?" etc. puts up his/her hand and sits down after giving/asking the question. (27) The game continues only until about ten students have asked a question, not to embarrass anyone. (28) For homework the students write five sentences comparing themselves to their friends.

Now that you have checked the classroom sample which comes closest to your teaching style, would you be so kind as to describe any activities which you use but which are not included in the classroom description.

2 (b) Additional activities:

II. Please answer the following questions:

1. What program/text do you follow?

2. If you were going to change your teaching approach, which classroom sample would you choose?

3. What problems do you encounter in achieving the level of performance that you would like to see?

4. Any further comments will be greatly appreciated and highly valued.

FOLLOW-UP LETTER

Dear Colleague:

Re: German Questionaire

The school year is rapidly coming to a close, and all of us are very busy. However, before the holiday spirit takes over, I like to remind you kindly of the questionnaire which I had sent out earlier this year. I certainly would appreciate receiving your reply sometime during the first week in July. Should you have sent off your reply already, I would like to thank you very much at this time.

Wishing you a relaxing summer, I sincerely remain,

Yours,

Dorothea Schmidt

THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How easy was it to identify with one of the scenarios?
2. Were the scenarios detailed/descriptive/clear enough?
3. Can you describe the approach you are using?
4. What determines your approach or method?
5. Which techniques/stretegies do you use lease frequently?
6. Why do you not use them?
7. Which techniques/strategies work best for you?
8. What is your present teaching situation like? (enrolment, students' background, text, facilities, etc.
9. Which strategies/techniques that you would like to employ are difficult in this situation?
10. Where did you receive your formal language training? When? Did it include methodology?
11. How do you include the teaching of cultural awareness in your program?
12. How do you carry out oral evaluation?
13. What aspect(s) of your program do you feel particularly good about?
14. Which problems do you feel are the most serious?
15. How would you improve the German program?

Appendix II

Tables I - XII

Table I Native - Non-Native German Speakers

	Number	Percent
Native German Speakers	30	68.2
Non-Native German Speakers	14	31.8
	--	-----
Total	44	100.0

Table II Degree Work of Non-Native German Speakers

	Number	Percent
Major Degree Work in German	7	50.0
Major Degree Work not in German	7	50.0
	--	-----
Total	14	100.0

Table III Time Spent in Any of the German-Speaking Countries

	Number	Percent
None	4	9.1
Weeks	1	2.3
Months	3	6.8
Years	36	81.8
	--	-----
Total	44	100.0

Table IV Overall Teaching Experience

Years	Number	Percent
1-5	9	20.4
6-10	7	15.9
11-15	12	27.3
16-20	8	18.2
21-25	4	9.1
26-30	4	9.1
	--	-----
Total	44	100.0

Table V Total German Teaching Experience

Years	Number	Percent
1-5	15	34.1
6-10	12	27.2
11-15	8	18.2
16-20	7	15.9
21-25	1	2.3
26-30	1	2.3
	--	-----
Total	44	100.0

Table VI Training in Formal Methodology Courses

	Number	Percent*
In the 1950s	1	2.2
In the 1960s	13	29.5
In the 1970s	15	34.1
In the 1980s	13	29.5
None	14	31.8

*Note: Where percentage does not add up to 100, more than one answer was given.

Table VII Formal Language Training

	Number of responses	Percent
Credit Courses Taken	32	72.7
No courses taken for credit	12	27.3
	--	-----
Total	44	100.0

Table VIII Methodological Practices

	Number	Percent*
Communicative Approach	18	40.9
Direct Method	18	40.9
Audio-Visual Method	6	13.6
Eclectic Approach (specified by teachers)	5	11.4
Reading Method	4	9.1
Grammar-Translation Method	3	6.8
Audio-Lingual Method	2	4.5
Individualized Approach	1	2.3

*Note: Where percentage does not add up to 100, more than one answer was given.

Table IX Methodological Practices among Native German Teachers

	Number	Percent*
Communicative Approach	13	43.3
Direct Method	12	40.0
Eclectic Approach (specified by teachers)	5	16.7
Audio-Visual Method	4	13.3
Reading Method	3	10.0
Audio-Lingual Method	2	6.7
Grammar Translation Method	1	3.3
Individualized Approach	0	0.0

*Note: Where percentage does not add up to 100, more than one answer was given.

Table X Methodological Practices among Non-native German Teachers

	Number	Percent*
Direct Method	6	42.9
Communicative Approach	5	35.7
Audio-Visual Method	2	14.3
German-Translation Method	2	14.3
Individualized Approach	1	7.1
Reading Method	1	7.1
Audio-Lingual Method	0	0.0
Eclectic Approach	0	0.0

*Note: Where percentage does not add up to 100, more than one answer was given.

Table XI Single Method vs. an Eclectic Approach

	Number	Percent
Single Method	25	56.8
Eclectic Approach (more than one method chosen)	12	27.3
More Chosen	6	13.6
Invalid	1	2.3
	--	-----
Total	44	100.0

Table XII Changes Which Teachers Would Make In Methodology

	Present Method	Number	Percent
No Change	E & G	1	
	E	1	
	eclectic	4	
	B	1	
	G	2	
	B & G	1	
	B & C	1	
	G,E,B	1	
		12	27.3
To a Communicative Approach (Classroom G)	B	4	
	A	1	
	C	1	
	?	1	
	D	1	
		8	18.1
To an Eclectic Approach (more than one method)	B-> F & G	1	
	D-> F & C	1	
	B-> eclectic	1	
	?-> eclectic	1	
	G-> eclectic	1	
	E-> B,D,E	1	
		6	13.6
To a Direct Method (Classroom B)	G	4	9.1
To an Individual Approach (Classroom F)	B & G	1	
	A,B,C,G	1	
	E	1	
	E,G	1	
		4	9.1
not indicated		9	20.5
invalid		1	2.3
		44	100.0